

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 were pending in this application. Claim 2 is amended and claim 9 has been canceled. New claims 10-22 are added. No new subject matter is believed to have been added by these amendments and support for these claims can be found in the specification as filed. Therefore, claims 1-8 and 10-22 remain in this application.

Applicants wish to thank Examiner for the acknowledgment that claims 2 and 4-8 contain allowable subject matter. In light of the above amendments and remarks below, Applicants respectfully request allowance of new claims 10-22.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

Claims 1, 3 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,578,656 to Samejima et al. ("the '656 patent"). In view of the following remarks, the Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections.

The present invention is directed to a working vehicle propelled by independently driven right and left running units. The working vehicle has, among other limitations, a body frame, a left and right stepless transmission, a left and right reduction mechanism and right and left base blocks wherein each base block is supported by the body frame and forms a housing base for the respective stepless transmission and the respective reduction mechanism. See Fig. 11.

The present invention provides that each base block is supported by the body frame and forms a housing base for the respective stepless transmission and the respective reduction mechanism. The advantage of this invention is described in detail in the specification.

In contrast, the '656 patent discloses a body frame 1 that includes right and left rear frames 8, along with other frame members. See col. 2, ll. 58-65. Further, as stated in the specification of the '656 patent:

[...] the right and left rear frames 8 are arranged inwardly of the right and left transmission cases 15 and fixed thereto with bolts.

That is, an entire transmission system including the power distributor 13a and right and left HSTs 14 and right and left transmission cases 15 has a rigid integral structure which reinforces the right and left rear frames 8 acting as right and left frame portions of body frame 1 for supporting the mower unit 7 as suspended therefrom. As a result, a desirable frame structure is

provided which has a sufficient strength for supporting the mower unit 7 in suspension, while achieving a simplified construction and lightening of the vehicle body.

See col. 3, ll.21-33.

Thus, frames 8 do not support HST 14 as there is no portion of frames 8 positioned between HST 14 and transmission case 15 (i.e. they do not form a housing base for the stepless transmission and also as a housing base for the reduction mechanism). See Figs. 5 and 11. Rather, HST 14 is connected to transmission case 15 only and not to frames 8. Further, the specification goes on to tell of the advantages of such arrangement. In addition, frames 8 are not supported by the body frame 1 as they are merely a component of body frame 1. For the foregoing reasons, the Applicants believe that the subject matter of independent claim 1 is not anticipated by the '656 patent. Claim 9 has been canceled and claim 3 depends from independent claim 1. Reconsideration of the rejections of claims 1 and 3 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration and removal of the rejections and allowance of pending claims 1-8 are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required, or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-0650.

Respectfully submitted,

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